



State of Wyoming Employee Housing Assistance Policy July 1, 2015

The State of Wyoming provides housing assistance to eligible employees as a strategy to aid recruitment and retention efforts in counties where the average cost of housing exceeds the statewide population weighted average.

The housing assistance is reviewed annually by the State Employee Compensation Commission (SECC) and approved by the Governor. Counties may become eligible for the housing assistance on an annual basis however the program starts over every biennium and the housing assistance amount is subject to change annually in July. The housing assistance payments will match the calculated amount each and every biennium. For example:

- If a county qualifies in Year 1 of the biennium, eligible employees will receive assistance payments both years of the biennium.
- If a county qualifies in Year 2, but not in Year 1, eligible employees will receive assistance payments for only the second year of the biennium.

Eligible employees will receive the difference between the statewide average and the county average.

Employee Eligibility Requirements and Restrictions:

- Employees must work and reside in the eligible county to receive the housing assistance.
 - Verification of physical address will be required (PO Boxes are not acceptable).
 - Employees who received the housing assistance as of June 30, 2009, but do not live in the eligible county will be allowed to continue to receive the housing assistance.
 - Should these employees change their physical address, and it remains outside the eligible county, they will no longer be eligible to receive the housing assistance.
 - Temporary, time-limited duties and interim assignments in the eligible county are not eligible.
- The housing assistance will be prorated based on the number of hours worked by the eligible employee in any given month, not to exceed the total assistance amount.
- Temporary employees (Class Code TP01) and contract employees (Class Code AWEC) are not eligible to receive the housing assistance.
- Employees who receive state provided housing are not eligible to receive the housing assistance.
- Employees who receive HOT SPOT assistance are not eligible to receive the housing assistance.
- Employees receiving the housing assistance are not eligible for per diem travel expenses to their primary work location.

The housing assistance calculation is developed by the Department of Administration & Information Economic Analysis Division using the following methodology:

As part of the Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI) data collection housing rental rates are collected on two and three bedroom homes; excluding gas and electric utilities. The WCLI collects housing rental rates in 28 Wyoming communities. The rental rates are collected twice a year, for the second and fourth quarters. For purposes of determining the housing assistance, the second and fourth quarter housing rental rates in each WCLI community are averaged to produce an annual average rate for each of the WCLI communities. From the 28 communities' annual average housing rental rates, a statewide standard deviation is calculated.

Each of the community's annual average rental rate is population weighted to determine a statewide population weighted average for houses. To determine the threshold that a community's average housing rental rate must exceed to qualify for the housing assistance, the statewide standard deviation is added to the population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate. If a community's average housing rental rate is above the threshold amount (statewide population weighted average plus the statewide standard deviation), the community qualifies for the employee housing assistance. Conversely, if the average housing rental rate falls below the threshold amount, it does not qualify for assistance.

County	House Rental 2014 Average	Assistance Amount	
Albany	\$981	NA	Population Weighted Average Housing Rental Rate
Big Horn	\$576	NA	
Campbell	\$1,159	NA	
Carbon	\$983	NA	\$1,042
Converse	\$1,398	\$356	
Crook	\$640	NA	
Fremont	\$949	NA	Threshold County Average Housing Rental Rate must be Above to Qualify
Goshen	\$630	NA	
Hot Springs	\$617	NA	
Johnson	\$880	NA	\$1,361
Laramie	\$1,136	NA	
Lincoln (Kemmerer)	\$627	NA	
Lincoln (Afton)	\$744	NA	
Natrona	\$1,188	NA	Counties that Qualify
Niobrara	\$653	NA	Teton
Park	\$870	NA	Converse
Platte	\$562	NA	
Sheridan	\$968	NA	
Sublette	\$1,148	NA	Allowance Rate
Sweetwater	\$1,076	NA	100%
Teton	\$1,938	\$896	
Uinta	\$807	NA	
Washakie	\$646	NA	
Weston	\$708	NA	

The current State of Wyoming Employee Housing Assistance Policy was created as a way to identify housing rental rates that are significantly higher than the statewide average. The policy is administered through the Human Resources Division of the Department of Administration & Information. The methodology for the current program was crafted in 2006 by a group with representatives from the Department of Administration & Information, the Governor's Office, and at the time, the Department of Employment.

The Housing Assistance Policy consists of comparing average annual county housing rental rates to a threshold to determine a county's eligibility. A county qualifies if their average annual housing rental rate is above the threshold (see below).

The annual Housing Assistance Policy is calculated once-a-year in April and is presented during the spring State Employee Compensation Committee (SECC) meeting. With the Governor's approval, the annual housing assistance goes into effect July 1.

Rental data collected for the Wyoming Cost of Living Index (WCLI), which is produced by the State of Wyoming, Economic Analysis Division, is utilized for the determination of counties that qualify for housing assistance.

Rental rates:

- Average rental rates for 2-3 bedroom houses (unfurnished, excluding gas and electric utilities) are produced from data collected as a part of the WCLI. The WCLI is published twice-a-year, 2nd and 4th quarter. Rental rates from both periods are utilized in the housing assistance calculation each April.
- The rental rate data is collected from newspapers, landlords, and real estate agencies in 28 Wyoming cities. Data is available for all Wyoming counties, but separate rental rates are published for Kemmerer and Afton in Lincoln County. In 2003, through legislative action, Afton was added as an additional sampling point in the WCLI. Therefore, rental rates are produced for 24 areas.
- For the employee housing assistance calculation, each county's average annual housing rental rate is the average of the most recent 2nd and 4th quarter housing rental rates from the WCLI.

Threshold calculation:

- Threshold = population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate + standard deviation
- **Population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate:** county population weights are applied (multiplied by) to each county's average annual housing rental rate and these products are summed. (Each county's contribution to the make-up of the population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate). This summation equals the population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate. Population weights are applied to more accurately represent the population in Wyoming. The population weights are derived from the annual population data released by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Standard deviation:** The standard deviation component shows how much variation exists from the average and is the standard deviation of all counties average housing rental rates.

Assistance amount:

Once a county has qualified for the housing assistance (their rental rate is above the threshold) the amount of assistance is determined by subtracting the population weighted statewide annual average housing rental rate from the qualifying county's average annual housing rental rate (average of the most recent 2nd and 4th quarter). This difference is the amount of assistance. If a county qualifies in the first year of the biennium, they will receive assistance payments for both years of the biennium. If a county qualifies in year 2 of the biennium, but not year one, they will receive assistance payments only in the second year of the biennium.

Budget Division Processes/Requirements for Housing Assistance

The following are the processes the Budget Division follows to manage the interaction of Housing Assistance during a current biennium and when new biennium budgets are being developed.

Current Biennium

As a result of the Housing Assistance policy being calculated annually in April qualified status and the level of assistance are identified after biennium budgets are appropriated. In this case agencies are asked to cover this cost with existing 0100 series (personnel) appropriations through the current biennium.

New Biennium

Reoccurring or newly established Housing Assistance is added during the development of the upcoming biennium budget. This action takes place through the "Chapter 17 Report" by resetting each position to zero then downloading the Payroll System (Salaries/Benefits) into IBARS, where benefits/Housing Assistance is calculated for each qualifying position. During the development of the following biennium the process is repeated and benefits/Housing Assistance is again removed and calculated for each qualifying position. If a county loses qualifying status after the biennium budget has been approved the appropriated funds remain in the 0100 series and the general funds revert at the close of that biennium.